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Saving the World the Right Way: Altruistic Education

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Saving the World the Right Way: Altruistic Education

Abstract

Intelligence and passion are not enough for humans to become all that they can be. Hitler and the Nazis too had a lot of intelligence and passion. But what they did not have is the wisdom of how to use their intelligence and passion for the good of mankind. Nevertheless, the question of developing how we, humans, ought to use our intelligence and passion is often neglected in modernity when compared with the obsession we have of increasing our grit and wit. This obsession reflects the current state of education whereby the function of education today is often cheapened to: (1) giving away power without ensuring that power is equally matched by responsibility, duty, moral, and obligation to others, and (2) providing knowledge without offering the purpose behind it. The result of giving away power without character has made possible the world where the educated could use the power they received through education to take advantage of those who are less fortunate. And the consequence of teaching the “what” without the “why” has robbed students of the purpose behind their own education. To solve these critical issues, this paper begins its investigation on Aristotle’s axiom that happiness is what all humans seek. Afterward, through scientific research, it will show how the common pursuit of one’s own happiness backfires. Instead, it will suggest how learning to *live for less not more* is actually what leads one toward one’s “complete happiness,” growth, virtue, freedom from one’s own desires, being fully “human,” as well as the fulcrum upon which the world can shift from being the world of takers towards a world of givers. This process is called “altruistic human flourishing.” And the education which can facilitate this process of altruistic human flourishing is called “Altruistic Education.” Altruistic Education is what this paper offers as the solution to bettering the world. It accomplishes such goal by cultivating students who are not only capable but also compassionate, teaching the “why” of education as much as the “what,” and to help students gain not only knowledge but, more importantly, how to find the joy and beauty in applying that knowledge above and beyond themselves.

Keywords

altruistic education, education, altruism, character education, character, nature of happiness, happiness paradox, happiness development, happiness

Disciplines

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Saving the World the Right Way: Altruistic Education

Supakorn Laohasongkram

University of Pennsylvania

A Capstone Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Applied Positive Psychology

Advisor: Alejandro Adler, Ph.D.

August 1, 2017

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Question not Asked Enough: How do We Save the World?

“The noblest question in the world is: What good may I do in it?”

– Benjamin Franklin (n.d.)

A wise man once told me “If life is difficult, it is because you are not living it right.” Saving the world is perhaps the same, in that it is hard to change the world if one is not doing it right. The goal of this research paper is to offer the right way to save the world. The initial reaction to this might be that it is “cliché” or “overambitious.” But I can assure you that the task of changing the world lies no further than the choices we make in our everyday life. *There is nothing cliché or idealistic about our duty and responsibility as humans for making this world a better place.* We exist because of the earth. And just like the duty of a child to his or her parents, our responsibility to help the earth is no different. So let’s do what is necessary by giving our best to the altruistic task of saving the world the right way.

This paper will first explore the question of how to best save the world by drawing from the early debate of human nature all the way up to the current scientific research to show how humans, since birth, are hardwired with the tendencies for good and evil.

Second, this paper will dive deep into why living above and beyond one’s own tendencies for good and evil is the key to bettering both oneself and the world. It will underline the critical knowledge of how the pursuit of living above and beyond oneself is *not* mutually exclusive from one’s pursuit of well-being. Paradoxically, it is what enables humans to live a eudaimonic life—a good and meaningful life. Happiness is not about getting more; it is actually about getting less. From the outside, the difference between choosing to live for and by one’s impulses and desires as opposed to living above them might seem small at first but, as this paper will elucidate, this small choice is what literally makes a world of difference.

Third, this paper will investigate how modern education plays the role of bringing out the best of humanity. What the reader will quickly find out is how *modern education, with its excessive focus on academic success, does not encourage the best within us*. Important concepts such as purpose, character, passion, integrity, virtue, compassion, and well-being are often neglected or abandoned from education. More often than not, it encourages in-group competition which conditions students to be individualistic rather than prosocial. Modern education does not do enough to develop any kind of character for the students. Instead, the function of education today is reduced to merely putting the power in the hands of the students without teaching them how to exercise it. As a result, we have an education system which perhaps does more harm than good by producing students who enter the world thinking more about their self-interest over how to better it. This section will end with a suggestion of how the goal of education should not settle for just learning about how to survive or even thrive but how to altruistically flourish.

Fourth, it will introduce altruistic education as the right way of saving the world. Power is a double-edged sword. Each person can use it for good or evil. The only line which differentiates how a person would use one's power and privilege is whether or not one will use it for his or her ends or others. The problem humanity is facing is not how we can teach ourselves to have more wealth and power, rather is *how can we teach ourselves to find happiness in using that wealth and power beyond oneself*. Hence, education should not deprive students of the chance to cultivate their character. Instead, education should help students to strive toward making the good, right and altruistic choices of using their power and privilege not only for themselves but the good of mankind. The education which helps students to find the joy and beauty in giving up, overcoming, and transcending one's selfish tendencies toward growth is what this paper calls "Altruistic Education."

This paper will conclude with the question of whether or not more wealth and power can save the world. It will point out the fact that humanity has seen unprecedented growth in wealth and resources, but regarding human's culture, we are still stuck in the centuries-old ideology that self-interest is what drives the world. What we need is a cultural revolution where self-interest is no longer the driving force of our economy, but altruism and compassion are. This, of course, is no easy task. But it is a necessary one. For this reason, it will end with a proposal for further research as the necessary first step toward creating the first of its kind an "Altruistic School."

So without further ado, let's start by understanding what humans are capable of and how the survival of humanity might just depend on how intelligently we work with our innate tendency for both good and evil.

Human Proclivity for Good and Evil

"There are two great forces of human nature—self-interest, and caring for others."

– Bill Gates (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2008)

Are humans innately good or bad? Or are humans born as blank slates like how John Locke (1995) famously described in Latin as "*tabula rasa*." For centuries philosophers, most notably Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, contemplated these perennial questions. On the one hand, Hobbes (1969) believed that humans are born wicked and selfish. While, on the other hand, Rousseau (1950) criticized Hobbes and stated how humans in their "primitive state" are naturally "civil" and "moral." Who is right? Recent groundbreaking research in developmental psychology and moral psychology provide some clarity over this unending speculation. And the answer appears to converge to the fact that both Hobbes and Rousseau were right. Humans are born with the capacity for transcendental kindness to unspeakable cruelty.

Many intellectuals would like to believe that humans are born a blank slate, but research in identical twins who are separated at birth seem to suggest otherwise. If the human mind is entirely dependent upon socialization, culture, and experience, then, reared apart identical twins should have nothing in common. Yet, in a landmark study of over 100 reared-apart twins and triplets by the University Minnesota—Minnesota Twin Family Study—what researchers found is that these long-lost twins show strong similarities not only in their intelligence but also in personality traits such as temperament, occupational interest, leisure-time interests, social attitude and even religious orientation (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990; Segal, 2012).

In one case study, a pair of twins was separated at birth (Pinker, 2003). One was raised a Catholic in a Nazi family in Germany while the other was brought up in a Jewish family in Trinidad. When these two met in Minnesota, they were both wearing the same navy blue shirts with epaulets. Both of them enjoyed dipping butter toast in coffee, both liked to keep rubber bands around their wrists, both flushed the toilet before using it and after, and both of them love to see people's reaction when they sneezed in a crowded elevator. These astonishing similarities are, by no means, the only findings supported by research. In fact, study after study consistently agrees on this conclusion (Svensson, Larsson, Waldenlind, & Pedersen, 2003; Kendler, Thornton, & Pedersen, 2000). All of these point to the fact that humans are born predisposed with "something." We are not just blank slate. Here, the question that follows is, "If we are not blank slate, then what are we?"

Are humans born wicked and selfish? In one of the most famous books in Economics, *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith (1900) seems to hint that that is the case. He said, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love" (Smith, 1900, p. 27).

Self-interest is what Smith (1990) seems to suggest lies at the core of each and every one of us. But what does modern-day research have to say about such bold claim? Here, data also seems to support this grim vision of the human nature.

In a scientific study using behavioral economics, researchers Sheskin, Bloom, and Wynn (2014) gave young children between the ages of five to ten chips which they were told could be later exchanged for toys. However, these chips were separated into two piles. One pile was for them to keep while the other went to a stranger whom they would never meet. In one scenario, children were given two choices between keeping one chip and giving away one chip, or in this case, it's a one to one ratio, to keeping two chips and giving away three chips. Here, the best solution seems to be the latter than the former because why would anyone choose to get one instead of two? However, that was not the result.

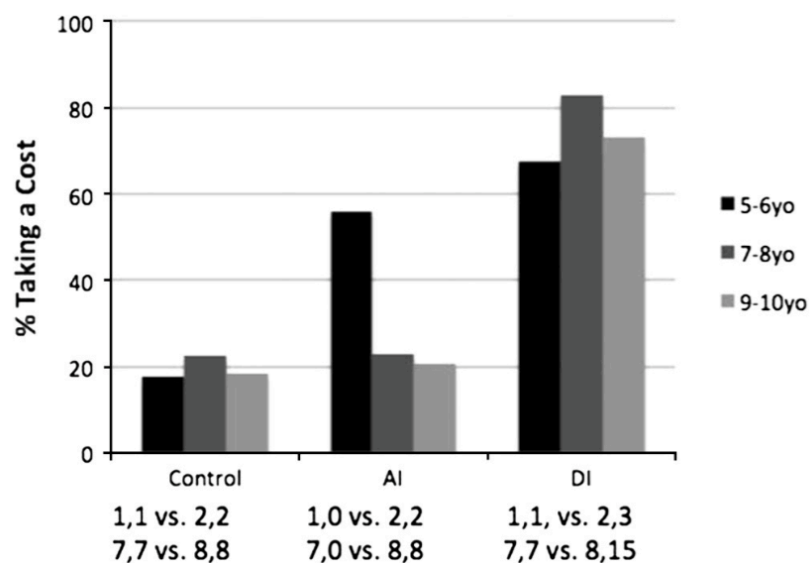


Figure 1. Graph of choices for costly trails. Reprinted from “Anti-equality: Social comparison in young children,” by M. Sheskin, P. Bloom, & K. Wynn, 2014, *Cognition*, 130(2), p. 152–156. Copyright 2013 by Elsevier. Reprinted with permission.

73.9% of children aged five to six, 87.5% of children aged seven to eight, and 78.4% of children aged nine to ten preferred to have less (taking a cost) or choosing one to one over

two to three to avoid Disadvantageous Inequity (DI). Worse, in scenarios where children were given a choice between getting more chips while maintaining equity versus incurring the cost of getting fewer chips to gain an Advantageous Inequity or AI (1:0 vs. 2:2 and 7:0 vs. 8:8), younger children prefer to take less just to gain a relative advantage. Below is the actual footage from the experiment of a young child choosing to have less to avoid relative disadvantage (left) as well as choosing to have less just to gain a relative advantage (right).



Figure 2. Pictures of a young child avoiding DI and preferring AI. Left picture from P. Bloom (2013), right picture from Sheskin, Bloom, and Wynn (2014). Reprinted with permission.

What is evident through this experiment is that even in win-win situations where children could get more for both themselves and others, they will *not* choose such outcomes if that puts them at a disadvantage in relation to others. In younger children, the result is even crueler. Children would even go so far as to have less just to be advantageous in relation to others. This result seems to indicate that Hobbes was right—humans are born selfish. But is that the end of the story? Here, Paul Bloom (2013), a developmental psychologist at Yale University seems to have some strong counter evidence in his study of babies.

What Bloom (2013) discovered is that Hobbes was right *but*, more importantly, so was Rousseau: humans are born predisposed *not* only with the capacity to be selfish but also

with the capacity to be altruistic. The scientific evidence which points to this originated from a series of experiments on the moral sense of babies between the age of three to twelve months (Hamlin & Wynn, 2011; Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom, 2003a, 2008b, 2010c; Kuhlmeier, Wynn, & Bloom, 2003).

In these experiments, babies were shown different skits in which three shaped-objects were portrayed as three characters—one attempting to accomplish a certain task, one demonstrating prosocial behavior by helping, and another demonstrating antisocial behavior either by obstructing or hindering the task. After the skit, babies were presented with the prosocial and antisocial characters in which the babies choose one. Below is a graph of the result in a skit where the prosocial character demonstrated a giving behavior and the antisocial character showed a taking behavior.

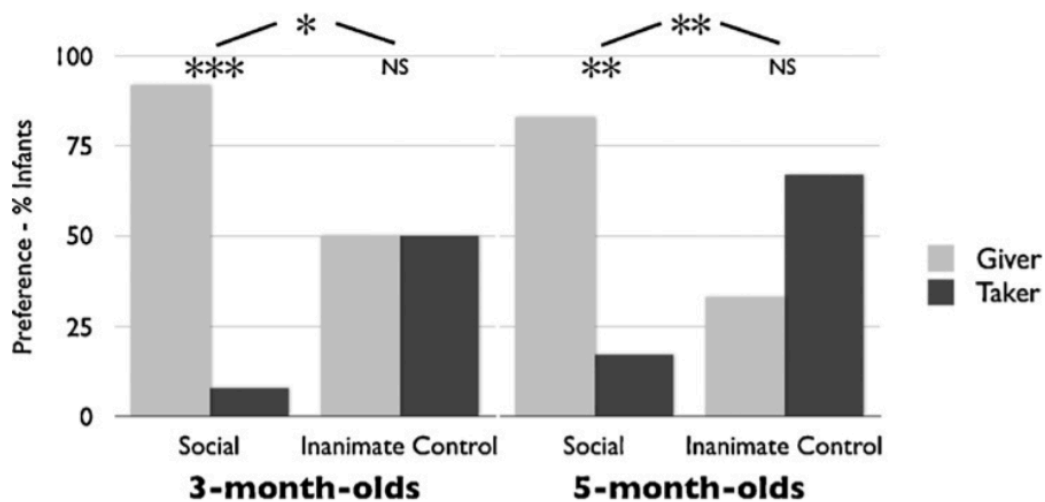


Figure 3. Bar graphs of 3-months-olds and 5-month-old preference for giver against taker. Reprinted from “Young infants prefer prosocial to antisocial others,” by J. K. Hamlin, & K. Wynn, 2011, *Cognitive development*, 26(1), p. 36. Copyright 2010 by Elsevier. Reprinted with permission.

There was also a control group in which the babies were given a choice of the same characters without the skit. Here, the experiment shows that there is a significant difference (Fischer's Exact Test, $p < .005$) between the social (with skit) and nonsocial (without skit). While there is no significant difference between the test groups of three and five month old babies ($p > .99$), more than 80 percent of the infants who saw the skit significantly preferred the Givers over the Takers. A similar result is also evident in another context where one character was shown helping open a box of toys, and another was shown hindering another from opening (Hamlin & Wynn, 2011). Using this built-in moral sense of right and wrong, the next experiment will go even further to show how human infants extend and translate this knowledge into real action.

In a study by Warneken and Tomasello (2006), they showed how human infants instinctively help strangers without any pre-conception of receiving any immediate benefits. In this experiment, adults pretended to be struggling to achieve various mundane tasks such as picking up a dropped pen, opening a cabinet to put things inside, and stacking up books on top of another while babies are watching. Human infants, even before these human infants were able to speak, who noticed the struggling adult would routinely demonstrate altruistic behavior without any type of encouragement by aiding the adult in completing these tasks. It is true that humans might be hardwired to act selfishly but this shows how humans also are hardwired to act altruistically.

Tracing all the way back to the seventeenth century on the debate of human nature between Rousseau and Hobbes all the way up to the modern research in developmental psychology, this section explored the question of whether humans are innately good or bad. The Minnesota Twin Family Study (Bouchard et al., 1990; Segal, 2012) revealed how identical twins are born predisposed with certain tendencies which disprove John Locke's idea that humans are born blank slates. Although at the beginning of the section, it has cast a

grim vision of human nature as inherently selfish by looking at how young children prioritize self-interest over prosocial behavior, Paul Bloom's experiments on babies contrasted that view by showing how the innate moral compass in babies can also lead them to act altruistically. Even Adam Smith who has frequently been thought of as a propagator of the idea that humans are naturally selfish (Schwartz, 2015), has a more nuanced perspective of what the human nature is (Pinker, 2002). In *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith (1761) stated:

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. (p. 9)

Humans are not born entirely selfish or entirely altruistic; rather we are born with the capacity for both. So far, this section rigorously made a point that people are both good and bad using scientific proofs, sophisticated experiments, and complex data. But in reality, it does not take anything beyond common sense to see through our own experience and countless encounters with other human beings to realize this fact (Pinker, 2002). Even within ourselves, we possess some parts that are worthy of admiration and some that, even to ourselves, we wish we never had. Throughout the history of mankind, there have been figures as altruistic and inspiring as Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa and someone like Hitler who started a genocide against millions. The question that follows then is, "What exactly differentiates the best and the worst of our human tendencies?" The next section will explore

this question by introducing the process of “altruistic human flourishing” and how that holds the key to making this world a better place.

Altruistic Human Flourishing

“The true value of a human being can be found in the degree to which he has attained liberation from the self.”

– Albert Einstein (Einstein & Calaprice, 2010, p. 177)

Humans are born predisposed with different tendencies. But what humans have in common is that they live to seek happiness. But what exactly is happiness? And how does that have anything to do with bettering the world? The answer to that question resides in how each of us, humans, seeks and defines “happiness.” Some might pursue happiness by taking advantage of others and/or obtaining more wealth and power for oneself. For some happiness might exist beyond the self through the compassionate act of altruism. Happiness, thus, is no trivial matter. It is what dictates how humans behave, drives our economy, and ultimately shapes and defines our world—for better or for worse. How each of us come to understand and achieve “happiness” is what will come to differentiate the best and the worst of humanity. This section will begin by diving deeply into the ancient and philosophical journey on the work of one of the most influential thinkers of all time, Aristotle, in his investigation into the nature of happiness.

Aristotle began his main treatise on ethics, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as follows:

Every skill and every inquiry, and similarly, every action and choice of action, is thought to have some good as its object. This is why the good has rightly been defined as the object of all endeavor. (NE 1.1)

He then went on to ask:

What is the highest good in all matters of action? As to the name, there is almost complete agreement; for uneducated and educated alike call it happiness, and make happiness identical with the good life and successful living. They disagree, however, about the meaning of happiness. (NE 1.4)

What exactly is the meaning of happiness? This is the question that Aristotle (trans. 1985) wanted to understand. To further this investigation into the nature of happiness, he then looked at what constitutes something to be “good.” And what he saw is that an object becomes “excellent” or “good” when it serves its proper function. For example, an eye is good when it can give a clear and accurate image. A good violinist is one who plays the violin with excellence, and that is what each violinist aims at. But what about humans? What is the function of human? Or to put it another way: what is it that makes a human being, human? The best way to answer this question is to see what makes human unique by juxtaposing the differences between animals and humans.

Small Choice, Big Difference

“In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”

– Mahatma Gandhi (n.d.)

What differentiates us, humans, from mere animals? According to Aristotle (trans. 1985), living a life of pleasure or a life of enjoyment of merely satisfying one’s own senses is no difference to the life of a “fatted cattle (NE. 1.5)”. Beast or animal is the slave of its sensuality. A moth cannot resist its own impulses of flying towards the light of the bonfire. Its impulse demands it to do so, and thus it must fly towards its own demise. When a dog is in shock or a state of panic, it does not rationalize. It will attack even its owner if its instinct calls for such an action. When a group of monkeys is hungry, they will steal food regardless

of whether or not it was moral or immoral. Animals are slavish to the demand of their own tendencies.

Man, like an animal, possesses sensuality. He sometimes desires things that are detrimental to his well-being, like drugs, junk foods, and alcohol. And when a hundred-dollar bill is dropped in front while no one is watching, he can be tempted by his greed to take it. *But unlike animals, humans are not the slaves of their own sensuality* (James, 1892). Man is not subjected to obey his impulses. Instead, once he is conscious of his impulses, he can choose what course of action he should take. Victor Frankl beautifully described this unique human capacity as follow: “Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” (Frankl, n.d.) What distinguishes humans from animals, therefore, is the fact that *humans have the freedom to choose how they respond to their own impulses and desires*.

Now, the big question here is why should anyone live above and beyond his or her impulses and desires? Doesn't that come at the cost of one's own happiness? If one lives for others, then how can one be happy? Isn't Aristotle trying to understand what happiness is? And how could Aristotle say that a virtuous life is a happy life? These are important questions which the following paragraphs will discuss. Choosing to live in accordance with one's desires and impulses as opposed to living above and beyond oneself might seem minuscule at first; but this small choice is what, literally and figuratively, makes a world of difference. Depending on how each of us chooses, it will differentiate between the best and worst of our humanity.

“Human” or “Beast”

The first distinction is how giving in to one’s own impulses and desires makes us more like a “beast” while choosing to live above and beyond oneself makes us more “human.”

Here, Aristotle said,

To judge from the lives that men lead, most men seem to identify the good, or happiness, with pleasure: which is the reason why they love the life of enjoyment.

The mass of mankind is evidently quite slavish in their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts. (NE 1.5)

When Aristotle (trans. 1985) said, “identifying the good, or happiness, with pleasure,” what he is saying is that we, humans, often prefer to live life in accordance with our desires—doing what we want rather than doing what we should, living life only for oneself or for one’s group rather than for the good of all. “Beasts” too live in accordance with their impulses and desires; and for that reason, Aristotle equated humans who live such a life as “life suitable to beasts.”

Humans, unlike animals, have what Frankl (1963) alluded to above as the “space” and this space is what allows humans the “power to choose” and break away from just being “beasts.” The last section on human proclivity has shown how humans are born selfish. We are born with the desire to self-preserve and, at times, we often put our own self-interest before others. But when we can overcome our greed and selfishness to choose what is right and good beyond our proclivity, *that is when we become most human.*

Abraham Maslow (1965) spent his entire life studying what makes humans “fully human” in what he termed, “self-actualization.” Maslow defined self-actualization as “experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption. ... The key word for this is “selflessly,” and our youngsters suffer from too little selflessness, too much self-consciousness” (p. 7). His description of the self-actualizing people is even more

in line with this logic of how we, humans, become fully human when we live above and beyond oneself as he stated: “Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves” (p. 6). In fact, in his later years, Maslow (n.d.; 1969; 1971; Koltko-Rivera, 2006;) himself critiqued his own concept of “self-actualization” in which he placed “self-transcendence” above “self-actualization” as the sixth need in his hierarchy of needs, whereby the self becomes actualized when living above and beyond itself.

Both Aristotle and Maslow seems to agree on one converging point: humans become most “human” when we choose to live above and beyond oneself. It is no wonder why the word “humane” or to be “humane” is frequently associated with showing or having compassion, tolerance, generosity, mercy, forgiveness, love, and benevolence—all of which have in common the characteristic of putting others before oneself. (Tolerance, for example, is to put one’s own frustration and hatred aside for others.)

“Freedom” or “Slavery”

The second distinction in one’s choice between choosing to give in to oneself to living above and beyond oneself is the difference between being the slave to one’s own impulses and desires or having the freedom from one’s own impulses and desires. Not only did Aristotle (trans. 1985) rebuke a “life of enjoyment” or a life lived in accordance with oneself as the life “suitable for beasts,” he also equated it with the word “slavish.” When a man is tempted by his greed, he, unlike an animal, has a choice or what Frankl (1963) described earlier as the “power to choose.” The first is to give in to his greed and do whatever it demands of him and become the slave of his own greed. While another is to come to face his greed yet chooses *not* to be swayed by it; in which case, he gains, what Frankl (1963) stated above as the “freedom” from the self. The word “dependent” and “independent” can

also be used instead of “freedom” and “slavish.” How independent one is from oneself determines the degree of one’s freedom.

This description of being dependent and independent perfectly fits with the idea of attachment and non-attachment in Buddhism (Pakaratsakun, 2014). When one becomes attached to something, our happiness is dependent upon that which one becomes attached. Aristotle (trans. 1985) made this same point using fame and honor as the examples when he said:

It[the pursuit of happiness through honor] seems to be more superficial than what we are looking for, since it rests in the man who gives the honor rather than in him who receives it, whereas our thought is that the good is something proper to the person, and cannot be taken away from him. (NE 1.5)

Once we become attached to fame or honor, what we are saying to others is, “Here is my happiness. Take it!” It is as if one has given up one’s own rights and freedom to be happy and put it in the hands of others to decide whether or not one should be happy. And when one’s happiness is dependent on fame and honor, one then becomes “slavish” to fame and honor. This is what Buddhism calls, “Attachment.” Attachment does not only apply to fame and honor. One can be attached to anything be it wealth, power, pleasure, or—as we will later see—even to happiness itself. While being detached from fame and honor is not to be wavered by fame and honor. One, therefore, retains both the freedom as well as the rights to one’s own happiness regardless of whether or not we have or do not have fame and honor. This is the kind of happiness which as Aristotle said above is “proper to the person, and cannot be taken away from him.” This is what Aristotle termed “complete happiness” or “perfect happiness.” Even Aristotle’s mentor, Plato, said something similar, “The man who makes everything that leads to happiness depends upon himself, and not upon other men, has adopted the very best plan for living happily” (Chang, 2006, p. 633).

In summary, the degree to which we can detach or liberate ourselves from what we come to be dependent on determines one's level of freedom toward happiness. This subsection has already begun to touch upon how the small choice of living above and beyond oneself can lead one away from what Aristotle (trans. 1985) called "incomplete happiness" toward "complete happiness." This distinction is what the next subsection will explore in greater details.

"Complete Happiness" or "Incomplete Happiness": The Happiness Paradox

Among all of the distinctions up to this point, the one between "complete happiness" and "incomplete happiness" is by far the most complicated and most crucial of all. Aristotle believed (trans. 1985) that a happy life is a virtuous life. But to live a virtuous life, he insisted that one must live in ways that are both unique as well as most "human" or specifically by living above and beyond oneself. This seems almost illogical because how can living *not* for oneself leads one towards happiness? The goal of this sub-section is, thus, to clarify and untangle this happiness paradox. First, it will look towards modern research to see what it has to say about this ancient wisdom of virtue as happiness. Afterward, it will further break down this happiness paradox using an analogy of happiness as a cup. All of these aim to show that happiness has nothing to do with how much we have but, more importantly, how satisfied we are with what we have. Having more for ourselves doesn't mean we will be happy if our ego or what we need for ourselves to be happy is ever expanding. Unlike Bao and Lyubomirsky (2014) who only tried to make happiness last by adapting to the "Hedonic Treadmill," this sub-section will break it. It will show that not only is this possible in every moment but breaking such cycle will lead one to what Aristotle (trans. 1985) called "complete happiness."

It is a common belief that if one cares about something then whatever one cares about should improve and grow over time. Nevertheless, recent researches (Mauss, Tamir,

Anderson, & Savino, 2011) found evidence which directly contradicts this belief on the subject of how people value happiness. The conclusion from two empirical studies—one correlational and another experimental—suggested that people who highly value happiness set happiness standards that are difficult to reach, leading them to feel disappointed about how they feel, paradoxically decreasing their happiness the more they want it.

The first study analyzed the correlation between the degree to which individuals value happiness to psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and depression symptoms. 59 participants were asked to complete a set of questionnaires for each subject of interest. The result revealed that valuing happiness does not lead to greater happiness. Instead, the more people valued happiness, the lower were their hedonic balance, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction, and the higher their depression symptoms.

To further test if there is any causality in these correlations, the second study looked at whether or not valuing happiness has any direct causal effect on one's happiness. Scientists (Mauss et al., 2011) let 70 participants read a fake newspaper articles extolling the importance of happiness then randomly assigned half of the participants to watch a happy short film while the other half watch a sad short film. The researchers then measured their positive emotion afterward to see the differences. The result is shown below.

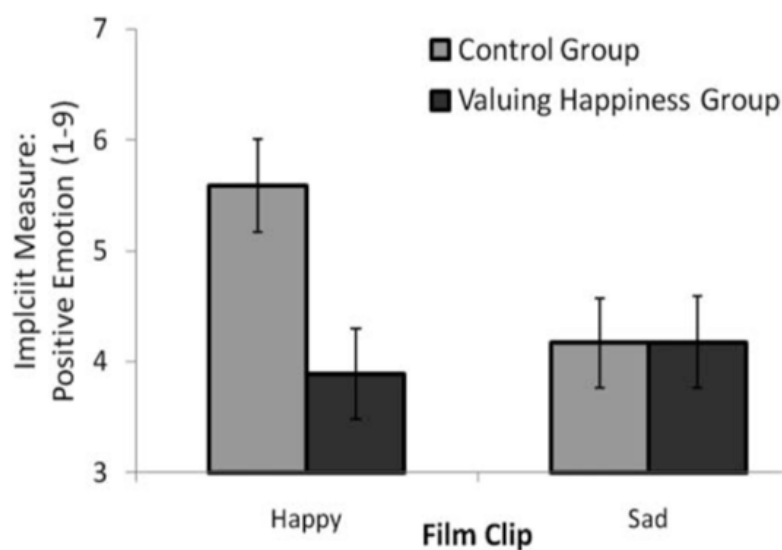


Figure 4. Bar graphs of positive emotion from the scale of one to nine after watching a happy or sad film clip. Reprinted from “Can Seeking Happiness Make People Unhappy? Paradoxical Effects of Valuing Happiness,” by I. B. Hamlin, C. L. Anderson, M. Tamir, & N. S. Savino., 2011, *Emotion*, 11(4), p. 807. Copyright 2011 by the American Psychological Association.

The x-axis shows what the randomly assigned participants watched—sad or happy film clip. The y-axis indicates the level of positive emotion scale from 1 to 9—“1” as not feeling any positive emotions and “9” as feeling extremely positive. The control group was not given the fake newspaper article. They simply watched the happy or sad film clip. The result for the control group showed, as expected, higher positive emotion after watching a happy film compared to watching a sad film. However, in the group where the importance of happiness was experimentally heightened, participants reported less positive emotion despite watching a happy film in comparison to watching a sad film.

There are three main insights from these two empirical studies. First is how the pursuit of one’s personal happiness backfires (Rath, 2015). These results are also consistent with other studies (Mauss et al., 2012) where participants, after happiness valuation manipulation, reported feeling lonelier as reflected in the lower level of progesterone sampled through their saliva.

Second is how the problem here is not so much about how much one experiences happiness but what one expects of one’s own happiness or how high the standard one sets for oneself to be happy. Mauss et al. (2012) reported

...people who value happiness may feel disappointed if they fail to feel happy at their own birthday party. In summary, the more people value happiness, the less likely they may be to obtain it, especially when happiness appears within reach. (p. 808)

This leads us to the third insight which relates to what this paper looked at earlier—the concept of attachment and how even the attachment of one’s own happiness is possible. Attachment is the process by which one’s happiness becomes dependent upon something else. And the last insight from these scientific findings is precisely how one’s happiness can be dependent upon itself. This recursive or chicken-and-egg kind of relationship within happiness is precisely why wanting to be happy ruins one’s own happiness. To want to be happy is to say to oneself that one is unhappy, that is why one needs to seek happiness. Or else, there should be no reason to want to be happy if one is already happy. To put this convoluted logic differently, the more one wants to be happy the less happy one becomes. Because those who are already happy don’t need to want to be happy, they already are.

Erich Fromm (2013), one of the world’s leading psychoanalysts, described this paradox of wanting to be happy as follows:

Selfishness is rooted in this very lack of fondness for oneself. The person who is not fond of himself, who does not approve of himself, is in constant anxiety concerning his own self. He has not the inner security which can exist only on the basis of genuine fondness and affirmation. He must be concerned about himself, greedy to get everything for himself, since basically he lacks security and satisfaction. The same holds true with the so-called narcissistic person, ... they actually are not fond of themselves, and their narcissism—like selfishness—is an overcompensation for the basic lack of self-love. (p. 96)

Here, Fromm (2013) equated the desire to be happy as “selfishness” and “greed.” These desires are concocted up as the overcompensation for the “lack of self-love.”

Does all this mean that we cannot pursue happiness at all? And didn’t Aristotle say that happiness is what we all pursue? Of course, the question is not so much if we should or should not pursue happiness. Rather, the question here is *how and what kind of happiness*

should we pursue. Thus far, the paper has given vital clue and evidence of how and why the pursuit of one's personal happiness can be self-defeating. But the best way to further break down this happiness paradox is to come to understand it as analogous to a cup.

Happiness Works like a Cup

"The happiest people don't have the best of everything, they just make the best of everything they have."

– Unknown

What the quote above highlights is the fact that happiness has nothing to do with how much wealth, fame, or power one has. Rather, it is about how satisfied or contented one is with what one has. A rich man who wants to be richer is not happy or satisfied in comparison to a poor man who is satisfied with what he has. Happiness is about contentment. Hence, similar to the insights gained from earlier experiments, the more one wants to be happy the higher one's expectation of one's own happiness which as a result makes it more difficult to be fulfilled and easier for one to be disappointed. One's desire, therefore, is analogous to the size of the cup. The bigger it is, the harder it is to be filled.

Unfortunately, in today's capitalistic society where one is constantly pushed to have greater wants for wealth, fame, power, and pleasure as a way of gaining happiness for oneself, one's cup seems only to grow bigger and bigger. When we have a hundred thousand dollars, we immediately look ahead towards having one million dollars. And when we have one million dollars, we want ten million dollars and so on and so forth. "Hedonic Treadmill" is the term intellectuals often used to describe this fleeting or carrot-on-a-stick kind of happiness. It is a kind of happiness which is always one step in front of where one wants to be. Consequently, one can never be satisfied or happy since one's cup can never be filled.

This kind of pursuit of happiness is what Fromm (2013) also found in his study of the effect of capitalism on the individual psyche in which he described it as:

Selfishness is one kind of greediness. Like all greediness, it contains an insatiability, as a consequence of which there is never any real satisfaction. Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without reaching satisfaction. (p. 95)

Accordingly, “incomplete happiness” is the term this paper uses to describe such kind of pursuit towards happiness.

On the other hand, when our cups are small it makes it easier for us to be satisfied or happy. Aristotle was clever to use the term “perfect happiness” or “complete happiness” precisely because, first, it describes this exact phenomenon of when the cup is full or when it is complete. And when one’s cup is complete or full it means that one is satisfied or happy or is in the state where what we want is what we have or that there is nothing one wants more or less, or in the state of what Aristotle called “perfect happiness.” Unlike the endless chasing of greater happiness, by making one’s cup smaller, one’s cup is completable, or one’s happiness is achievable. It bypasses the self-defeating pattern of ruining one’s own happiness because of one’s own expectation of how much more one should be happy.

Having a smaller cup also means that one’s happiness is less dependent upon external factors. For example, if one does not expect anything on one’s own birthday party, it is much more likely that one will *not* be disappointed in one’s own birthday party. Whether or not the birthday is great or boring, it matters little. Here, one retains one’s own happiness with oneself rather than externalizing one’s happiness outside of oneself. In short, the smaller our cups or the less we need for ourselves to be happy, the easier it is for us to be happy, the less dependent our happiness become to external factors—fame, wealth, power, or even our own birthday party, and the more freedom and access we have with our own happiness.

This wisdom of seeking happiness by making one's cup smaller instead of bigger is also what many prominent thinkers have discovered. Socrates, one of the founders of Western philosophy, once said, "The secret of happiness, you see, is not found in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less" (Dan, 2015, p. 96). John Stuart Mill who is one of the most influential thinkers in the field of economics and philosophy, said, "I have learned to seek my happiness by limiting my desires, rather than in attempting to satisfy them" (Mill, n.d.). And lastly, Epicurus (2016) in *Principal Doctrines* stated, "If thou wilt make a man happy, add not unto his riches but take away from his desires" (p. 21).

To summarize this sub-section, "perfect" or "complete" happiness is about satisfaction. It is when the cup is full. It is about why making our cups smaller makes happiness achievable. "Imperfect" or "incomplete" happiness is not about fulfillment. Instead, it is about the infinite chasing of our ever expanding ego which even the whole universe could not fulfill. It's about being reliant on external factors to make oneself happy. Clearly, it is much better to hold on to our happiness by keeping one's cup small; yet, as the next section will show, not many choose to live their lives in such a way. Instead, most people seek the "imperfect" kind of happiness by wanting more instead of learning to want less which consequently creates a world of takers rather than a world of givers.

How Happiness Defines the World

After studying over dozens of organizations with over thousands of people, the essential lesson Adam Grant (2016) gained through decades of research on what makes an organization successful is that a successful organization knows not only how to hold on to givers but, more importantly, how to weed out takers. *Now, what if this organization we are talking about is the world itself?*

As futile as the selfish pursuit of happiness is, it is also the most common. We, humans, are living in the world where the pursuit of self-interest is the norm. We praise and look up to those who are wealthy, famous, and powerful because deep down we too are guilty of wanting to be the same. When the status quo is that everyone wants to be selfish then being selfish is normalized whereby we say to one another how “it is ok to be selfish” because everyone else is too or how “it is ok to live a life of indulgence” while millions of others still suffer. It’s unclear how cold and heartless is the world we are living in today. But one thing is for sure; this kind of attitude towards seeking happiness will not save the world.

One of the themes of this paper is how happiness defines the world. Here, on the individual level, not only is the pursuit of expanding one’s own happiness both fruitless and self-defeating but, on the societal level, it is damaging and demeaning. It perpetuates what Grant (2013) called “taker cultures” or a culture where everyone is out only to further their personal ends. In the eyes of a taker, everything is nothing more than an object of indulgence. Even the selfless act of compassion is often taken advantage of and seen as “illogical,” “uneconomical,” and sometimes even as “stupid.” And when everyone’s quest to satisfy ourselves is ever growing, it is bound to clash. The result is the world we are living in today: a dog-eat-dog world where people pit their self-interest or the interest of their self-identified group against one another or sometimes even at the cost of others. The world then is reduced to a place to exploit and/or to satisfy ourselves.

For the last centuries, the world’s GDP has risen by a thousand folds (World Bank, 2017; “Two thousand years in one chart”, 2011), but why does it seem harder every day for one to be happy in modernity as evident in the unprecedented increase in depression and suicide (Värnik, 2012)? Why is there still prevailing problems of inequality, sexism, racism, terrorism, bigotry, and prejudices? Perhaps, the main reason here is because we are living in a world of takers where we care so much about ourselves that we don’t have the room in our

hearts to care for others. So what is the solution? Can we weed out all of the takers, like Grant (2016) suggested, who happens to be the majority? Or even ourselves? Obviously, we can't just "weed out" or get rid of people. That would not be right or possible. Here, the solution to saving the world this paper suggests is *to learn how to weed out the takers within by learning to seek happiness from making the cup smaller, not bigger*. This is what the next section will discuss in the distinction between "growth" and "decadence."

"Growth" or "Decadence"

"The key to growth is the introduction of higher dimensions of consciousness into our awareness."

– Lao Tzu (n.d.)

Why would choosing to live above and beyond oneself lead one towards what Frankl (1963) described earlier as "growth"? According to Maslow (1965), choosing to restrain oneself from one's unwholesome impulses and desires is what he called the "growth choice." It is what leads one to become all that they can be or to achieve self-actualization. Here is what he stated:

let us think of life as a process of choices, one after another at various choice points. At each point there is a progression choice and a regression choice. There may be a movement toward defense, toward safety, toward being afraid, but over on the other side is the growth choice. To make the growth choice instead of the fear choice a dozen times a day is to move a dozen times a day toward self-actualization. Self-actualization is an ongoing process; it means making each of the many single choices about whether to lie or to be honest, whether to steal or not steal at a particular point, to make each of these choices as a growth choice. This is movement toward self-actualization. (p. 111)

This particular process is what Maslow (1965) called “intrinsic learning.” The end goal, of course, is self-transcendence as the highest need for human flourishing (Maslow 1969; 1971). It is what he highly regarded as “the ultimate goal of all education.” Similarly, Williams James (1899) too recommended:

There is no better known or more generally useful precept in the moral training of youth, or in one’s personal self-discipline, than that which bids us pay primary attention to what we do and express, and not to care too much for what we feel. (p. 118)

To not care too much about one’s impulses and desires as a method to do what is right and good is for James (1899) both a “moral training” as well as “one’s personal self-discipline.”

For Aristotle (trans. 1985), a man of moderation becomes moderate because of his ability to realize his greed yet still choose to act in such a way that opposes his greed. Likewise, a man of courage becomes courageous by acting bravely, not because of the absence of his fear but *in spite* of his fear. What constitutes a virtue is that his choices should not be inconsistent, i.e. sometimes he chooses to be indulgent and sometime he chooses to be moderate. What Aristotle saw to be imperative to virtue is that these small choices, like abstaining from greed or overcoming one’s fear, have to be practiced until they become dispositions or habits. And that requires one to over and over again exercise our humanness and choose courage in the face of fear, moderation in the face of greed, tolerance in the face of anger and so on and so forth. These choices are the origin of virtues. They lead one towards what Aristotle (trans. 1985) termed, “human excellence”—“human” in the sense that the power to choose is what humans uniquely possess and “excellence” in the sense that when such ability to overcome one’s unwholesome desires and impulses becomes a disposition, it leads one to become virtuous. It is not surprising why Aristotle (trans. 1985) would suggest the following:

“The point is that moral virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains. We do bad actions because of the pleasure going with them, and abstain from good actions because they are hard and painful. Therefore, there should be some direction from a very early age, as Plato says, with a view to taking pleasure in, and being pained by, the right things. (N.E. 2.3)

It is not easy to selflessly do what is right when one gets nothing out of it. In fact, it is even counter-intuitive to make these growth choices which goes directly against one's own desires. There is no pleasure to be gained from not being able to eat my favorite sweets except in the long and tasteless goal of health. What pleasure do I get from spending hundreds of hours writing this research paper just to embarrass myself in front of others about some lame and cheesy goal of saving the world? These are real questions for me. But to give up writing this arduous paper, to indulge in my favorite sweets, or to mindlessly follow the path of least resistance which my unwholesome impulses and desires had laid out for me takes no resistance, mental strength, self-restraint, or self-control. And when there is absolutely no resistance, then there is also absolutely no growth—no growth in my strength to withstand my own unwholesome impulses and desires, no growth in my virtue, no growth in my freedom toward happiness, and no growth in my humanity.

Growth, for Aristotle (trans. 1985), is to make the “hard and painful” choice of doing what is right and good regardless of what one wants or does not want. Unlike the typical and uninspiring pursuit of happiness which one believes can be obtained by infinitely expanding one's ego, this kind of practice which Aristotle (trans. 1985), James (1899), as well as Maslow (1965; 1969; 1971) suggested is the opposite. It is about giving up, overcoming, and letting go of oneself for what is good and right for all. And as a byproduct, it makes one's cup smaller and smaller the more one chooses the growth choice over the regression choice. This same practice of reducing one's ego to gain, what Lao Tzu described in the quote on top of

this section as, “higher dimensions of consciousness” is also evident in the practice of charity seen in many religions.

Throughout the history of mankind, the common practice which most religions have is, without question, the practice of charity. In Christianity, St. Thomas Aquinas, placed charity in relation with all other Christian virtues as “the foundation or root” of them all (*“Charity”*, 2016). In Buddhism, the concept of charity is termed in Pali Sanskrit as “*Dāna*.” When tracing the provenance of this word, the definition is, “any action of relinquishing the ownership of what one considered or identified as one’s own, and investing the same in a recipient without expecting anything in return” (Krishnan & Manoj, 2008). Judaism too has the concept called “*Tzedakah*” which literally means giving aid and assistance to those in need (DeGroot, n.d.). It is also said that such act of charity benefits the donor much more than the recipients. But is that so?

On the surface, the practice of charity might simply be a feel-good kind of activity which humans sometimes do. But when one critically examines what lies at the heart of this timeless practice, the wisdom one finds is that the charitable act of giving is not just about giving. The goal in the practice of charity is to allow people the opportunity to soften their ego, learn how to break out of the “Hedonic Treadmill” to find happiness in the causes beyond oneself, experience “higher dimensions of consciousness,” cultivate the virtues of moderation, humility, and generosity, or, in short, grow one’s humanity through the practice of giving up a part of oneself or one’s ego or whatever one identified as one’s own. Giving is not just giving, it is also growth.

One important point to note here is to see how an altruistic or virtuous act leads to happiness. The practice of charity or giving encourages one to make the growth choice of making one’s cup smaller and, as a result, leads to greater happiness. The relationship

between being altruistic or being virtuous and being happy is, therefore, mutual. This is perhaps why Aristotle (trans. 1985) believed that a happy life is a virtuous life and vice versa.

There is a clear pattern in what these great thinkers and religions seem to suggest and agree upon. Religions might have called it “charity.” Frankl (1963) called it “the power to choose.” Aristotle (trans. 1985) called it “taking pleasure in, and being pained by, the right things.” Maslow (1965) called it “intrinsic learning.” James (1899) called it “moral training.” But whatever names one calls it, the bottom line is that by choosing the “growth choice” or making one’s cup smaller by overcoming and giving up one’s own impulses and desires in order to selflessly do what is right and good for all leads one towards growth. Conversely, when one makes the “regression choice” or a choice which concurs with one’s greed, fear, jealousy, hatred, and other unwholesome desires, one regresses from being “fully human” toward a slavish life of one’s own desires, given up the freedom to one’s own happiness, and live as Aristotle (trans. 1985) despised as “a life suitable to beasts.” To put this all together, below is the illustration of how the happiness paradox works.

HAPPINESS PARADOX



Grant (2013) said that a successful organization needs givers but so does a successful world. What will save the world is surely not a culture of takers but a culture of givers. This is what Matthieu Ricard (2015) also believes in his endorsement of what he calls an “altruistic society.” According to him, an “altruistic society” is possible through a cultural revolution from the culture of takers to the culture of givers. And this revolution begins at the small yet pivotal choices we make in our daily life between choosing to live for oneself or to live beyond it, to spend today to further one’s pleasure, fame, wealth, status and power or to ignore all that to pursue something that is larger than oneself. These choices are where this cultural revolution begins. *The key to saving the world, as well as oneself, therefore, is the ongoing process of weeding out the taker within, of finding happiness in giving up, overcoming, and transcending one’s selfish tendencies toward growth.* This process is what this research paper calls, “Altruistic Human Flourishing.”

The next section will look at the current state of this cultural revolution to see what the society, specifically in the scope of education, has done to cultivate a culture of givers. Here, the short and generous answer is, “not enough.”

Power Without Character and Knowledge Without Purpose

“A man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder.”

– Thomas Carlyle (n.d.)

The goal of education is to prepare students for life. But what kind of life does education today envision for its students? And does education, in fact, have any vision at all? This section will examine the evolution and trajectory from modern education to positive education then argue how the goal of both forms of education are still lacking because it only gives students more power without teaching them how to exercise it. Modern education is epitomized by its blind obsession with increasing the student’s general ability as measured by

academic performance (Jacob, 2017; Ladd, 2017; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). This overemphasis on academic achievement objectifies, devalues, and unnecessarily puts a tremendous amount of pressure on students, teachers, and parents which ultimately causes more harm than good.

Out of such short-sighted visions in modern education, positive education emerged with a more complete vision of education. By incorporating both cognitive ability and noncognitive abilities, such as grit, resilience, optimism, self-control, etc., into education, it looks beyond academic success towards what allows one to be successful in life (International Positive Education Network [IPEN], 2017; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009; Duckworth et al., 2007; Heckman, & Kautz, 2012; Heckman, & Rubinstein, 2001). Although educating both the heart and mind is a great vision for positive education but is just being smart and gritty enough for someone to better the world? To begin answering this question let's begin this section by examining modern education.

Modern Education

“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

– Albert Einstein (n.d.)

This subsection will specifically examine modern education and its unwitting obsession with increasing the student's “wit” or intelligence through academic performance. Modern education has placed excessive value and emphasis on grades, standardized tests, and academic performance (Ladd, 2017; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). In fact, it has put so much emphasis that now academic success is how modern education comes to measure itself (Jacob, 2017). Consequently, what this creates is a kind of pressure put on the shoulders of students as young as five years old, parents as well as

teachers to push and coerce students into performing well in school. But, as this sub-section will show, this emphasis to perform well in school is what led modern education to forget about the emphasis and responsibility for its students to perform well in life. Socrates once said, “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel” (Socrates, n.d.). But what modern education seems to be about is exactly the opposite.

First of all, we have an education system which is designed to judge more than to teach. Here, Chole Stanton (2015), the global representative of International Positive Education Network, expressed her concern for modern education as follows:

Overwhelmingly, in mainstream schools, I have heard pupils expressing frustrations concerning the pressures they feel from teachers and parents to attain “good grades” in subjects that they find challenging or irrelevant. I have heard children as young as five, including my own, worrying that they are “not good” at handwriting or maths. This was not simply displaying a fixed mindset, but more worryingly, children basing their sense of self-worth or identity on measurable academic outcomes, being tested at an increasing early age in the interests of accountability. These negative self-perceptions and premature, unnecessary anxieties over tests and status are potentially deleterious, contributing to the well documented concerns regarding child and adolescent mental health in the UK. (para. 4)

Why is education not helping students to actualize who they can be instead of judging them of what they can be or cannot be based on some made-up system of grading?

Don Benedict Pamintuan, seventeen, a physical therapy freshmen killed himself by shooting a shotgun under his chin which as the news reported “sending splatters of blood and brain on the walls and ceiling” over failing grades (Orzaeta, 2013). Amy Latham, eighteen, left a chilling message to her parents saying, “To save you looking for me I’m dead. I will probably be in a tree” (Carson, 2014, para. 1), thirty-six hours before her body was found

hanging in woodland because of her fear of failing in exams (Carson, 2014). Madison Holleran, nineteen, a track star at the University of Pennsylvania jumped off a parking garage because she felt overwhelmed by the pressure to perform well in school (Scelfo, 2015). An eleven years old girl in Singapore jumped to her death over getting two Bs instead of As in her exams in which her mother too took her own life months later (Koh, 2015). How many more need to die until we realize this system is broken?

This emphasis on academic performance does not only apply to students. Teachers are now being evaluated and scored based on student's grades (National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, 2016). Grading was initially created to help measure the process of teaching. However, in modern education, we have a system which reverses this process. Instead of helping the student to learn, teachers are forced to help the student get good grades. This idea is even applied at a whole school level where schools are now funded or even closed down based on the academic performance of their students (Jacob, 2007). Although modern education claims its goal is to be the increasing of the student's intelligence, the outcome is rather counter-productive with the ever increasing burden and emphasis on grades, standardized tests, and academic performance.

Secondly, by placing too much emphasis on grades, standardized tests, and academic performance, we have an education system which gets in the way of learning. Instead of taking in what students are most interested in or passionate, each student is forced to learn what adults believe they ought to be learning. Instead of working with the students' strengths, we have an education system which has absolutely no idea what the strengths of each student are besides what letter grades they received on their last exams. Instead of funneling the curiosity and joy of learning which every child possesses, we have an education which crushes and smothers this passion with besieging tests. Instead of teaching the important lessons of grit and perseverance, we have an education system which gives no second chance

and no opportunity for failure. Instead of fostering differences, diversity, individuality, and creativity in humans, we have an education system which forces students to conform under one golden standardized test. Instead of creating equal opportunity for all students to thrive, we have an education system which judges, alienates, and favors only those who can excel academically while leaving behind brilliant students who simply might not fit the mold.

Regardless of what dreams and hopes education might have for each student, its actions speak loudly on how modern education envisions its students to be nothing more than test-taking machines or what Socrates (n.d.) described as “vessels” to be filled. This exact phenomenon is what Paulo Freire (1993) famously described as the “banking model of education” whereby a student is viewed only as an empty account to be filled by the teachers. The results of the education based on the blind fixation on grades and standardized test is nothing short of disastrous. Einstein once said, “Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods” (Einstein & Calaprice, 2010, p. 188). If that is so, then what we have right now is a “shipwrecked” process of education which prioritized judging and labeling the worth of students by academic performance over teaching and a “shipwrecked” outcome of education which literally destroys lives. No human is alike. And so, the worth of human life cannot and should not be graded or a put on a golden scale because each is invaluable and irreplaceably unique. What right does education have to judge the worth and place any kind of valuation on the lives of humans left alone on our own sons and daughters? With these pressing issues at hand, scholars are beginning to think differently by looking at new ways of understanding education beyond just intelligence. The next section will look at this movement.

Positive Education

“Teaching the mind without the heart is no education at all.”

– Aristotle (n.d.)

Intelligence without hard work cannot lead one towards a successful life. Intelligence, thus, is not enough. This belief is what epitomizes positive education. Martin Seligman (Seligman et al., 2009), the founder of the field of positive psychology, often asks two questions to parents and teachers. The first asks “in two words or less, what do you most want for your children?” and the answers are usually happiness, success, health, satisfaction and the like. In short, what they want is well-being for their children. In the second question, he asked, “in two words or less, what do schools teach?” Here, the answers are “thinking skills,” “success,” “literacy,” “mathematics,” and the like. In short, as we have examined, school teaches skills which would allow students to be “smart.” Surprisingly, there is no overlap what so ever in what education hopes to accomplish and what it is doing. To bridge this gap, positive education believes in the two-fold mission whose goal is to educate what Aristotle might have called both the “heart” and “mind” or both “wit” and “grit” as the necessary catalyst to help students succeed not only in school but more importantly, in life (International Positive Education Network [IPEN], 2017; Seligman et al., 2009). Backed up by a large number of studies in the fields of education and psychology—Angela Duckworth (2016) and her study of “Grit,” Howard Gardner (1999) and his study of “Multiple Intelligences,” Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger (2011) and their study of “social and emotional learning,” James Heckman (Heckman, & Kautz, 2012; Heckman, & Rubinstein, 2001) and his study of “Noncognitive Skills”—this new movement looks beyond the old model of education as intelligence towards the need for a more complete and holistic view of education.

The first person in this movement is most notably Howard Gardner (1999) in his well-known study of multiple intelligences. He rejected the common belief that IQ, or the popular measure of intelligence, is what constitutes all of intelligence. Instead, he argued for eight other modalities of intelligence which allow humans to excel in various aspect of life: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. The implication of multiple intelligence paved ways to a new language and way for understanding intelligence beyond the confine of IQ.

Similarly, in a series of six studies, Duckworth et al. (2007) discovered how grit is more predictive of long-term success outcomes than IQ. Grittier individual attained high levels of education, earned higher GPAs, are more likely to pass the admission into West Point, and have higher chances to outperform less gritty competitors in a spelling bees contest. Though talent, like intelligence, is important for one to be successful, but what Duckworth (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth, & Seligman, 2005) argued that effort or grit is even more important.

James Heckman (Heckman, & Kautz, 2012; Heckman, & Rubinstein, 2001), a Nobel laureate in 2000 and the founder of the University of Chicago's Center for the Economics of Human Development, also reached this same conclusion. According to Heckman (2016), "Our ultimate goal is to improve human well-being" (para. 10); and the major determinant of well-being are skills. What kind of skills would lead one to well-being? Heckman (Heckman, & Kautz, 2012; Heckman, & Rubinstein, 2001) believes in a mix of "hard skills" or intelligence and "soft skills," such as grit, motivation, tenacity, trustworthiness, and perseverance are necessary. Still many would like to believe that IQ is highly correlated with income, but data that Heckman (2016) found suggested that IQ only makes up of about 1 or 2 percent of the difference. By assessing over thousands of participants, financial success was

less correlated with IQ and more correlated with the “soft skills”—namely high level of conscientiousness, diligence, perseverance, and self-discipline.

But, are all these conclusions just armchair speculation? Here, by incorporating noncognitive skills into schools, many have already seen real positive results. In the meta-analysis of over 213 schools with 270,034 students involved, Durlak et al. (2011) found how introducing social and emotional learning programs significantly improve students’ interpersonal skills, attitudes, behavior and academic performance as reflected in an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement. Other important applications such as the Geelong Grammar School, Penn Resiliency Program, Strath Haven Positive Psychology Curriculum have also reported significant increases in both academic performance and well-being (Seligman et al., 2009).

In conclusion, there is no doubt about the significance and benefits of this emerging movement of positive education. However, the question that must be asked is, “Can it save the world?” or “Is positive education the solution to turning the world from the world of takers to the world of givers?” Here, neither positive education nor modern education is looking far enough. The next subsection will further discuss why this is so and how education, if not careful, might become what stands in the way of an altruistic society by perpetuating the culture of takers.

Success for What? And Well-Being for Whom?

“I love the valiant; but it is not enough to wield a broadsword, one must also know
against whom.”

– Friedrich Nietzsche (n.d.)

The goal of positive education, as laid out by Seligman et al. (2009), is to meet the needs of both academic achievements as well as well-being. Together, they lay the

foundation for life's success (International Positive Education Network [IPEN], 2017; Seligman et al., 2009). Heckman (Heckman, & Kautz, 2012; Heckman, & Rubinstein, 2001) suggested the need for incorporating noncognitive skills into one's skill formation because he too saw it as a necessity for success. Duckworth's (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007) entire premise on grit is to show how grit is predictive of success. Of course, who does not want to have more grit and wit in order to be successful in life? But the question that every educator should think long and hard about is, "Success for what? And well-being for whom?" Is it for one's personal ends or is it for the betterment of this world? What is the true purpose of going to school to have more wit and grit? Is the purpose of education to teach students the joy and beauty of giving or is the purpose of education to empower students to become better takers? These are pivotal questions which education rarely talks about.

Today, the function of education is to merely put power in the hands of the students without teaching them how to exercise it. By playing the role of the generator and disseminator of truth and knowledge, education sees itself as "neutral" or purely "descriptive." But is that so? Here, Foucault (1988), one of the most influential philosophers of the century, and Freire (1993), a leading advocate of critical pedagogy, would disagree.

For Foucault and Freire, teaching is always a political act. According to Foucault (1988), knowledge and power are not independent entities rather they are inextricably related. This view is also shared by Freire (1993) who rejected the neutrality of knowledge and saw how the act of teaching is inherently a political act. What this simply means is that teaching is a double-edged sword. By making each student more powerful or giving students more wit and grit *does not* necessarily guarantee the fact that they will put the power they gained to good use. Theodore Roosevelt understood this relationship between knowledge and power for which he said, "A man who has never gone to school may steal a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad" (Sharp & Tilchin, 2011, p. 14).

Regardless of how much wit and grit one has or how much smarter or capable education can make a man if he is going to put them to evil use then what's the point? Positive education boasts itself over modern education about producing students who are both smart and gritty. If that smart and gritty student turns out to have zero consciences, then wouldn't it be better to have someone who has no conscience but is unintelligent and lazy? Why educate at all if that would mean putting more power in the hands of people who will put it to evil use?

Gardner (2015) also pointed out how Hitler and the Nazis too had a lot of wit and grit. Those who orchestrated the whole Enron scandal or the so-called "smartest guys in the room" too had a lot of wit and grit. Here, the problem education is facing at this moment is not so much what it should focus on—whether wit or grit or both. It is also not the problem of how to offer more wit and grit to students. Rather, *the real problem in education is how can education help students to put their education to good use*. Students are not, and should not be treated as if they are, only "vessels" or "empty accounts" to be filled. They too have the rights to understand the true purpose of their own education. And education ought to help them build their "why" to life as much as their "how" to life. According to Martin Luther King,

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. (King, Carson, Luker, & Russell, 1992, p. 124)

Wit and grit alone are not enough. What is needed is the question of how and for what purpose should one use one's wit and grit. Purpose is what Gardner (2015) also saw is the missing piece in education. For this reason, he proposed what he termed as "the triple DNA of education"—excellence, ethics, and engagement. Excellence is the wit or one's general

ability. Engagement is the attitude, or one's noncognitive ability, or grit. And ethics is the knowledge of how to put one's wit and grit to good use. Modern education focuses only on excellence. Positive education focuses on excellence and engagement. But none focuses on purpose or the study of how, why, and for what ends should one learn and use one's wit and grit.

The result of an incomplete education or an education without purpose or an education which fixated primarily on increasing the student's wit and grit is that we have an education system which has absolutely no clue what the students will do with its education. In fact, how education will be put to use is what education sees as not its responsibility. And when the education system does not care nor take responsibility for how its students use education, the result is that it has created, perpetuated, and made possible the culture of takers or the world where those who are educated could use their power and privilege gained through education, to take advantage of those who are less fortunate. Graduating from top universities does not ensure in any way that the students will enter the world thinking about how to better it. Worse, those who received the best education today are often judged based on his or her ability to perform more than their reason to perform.

It is irresponsible, easy and requires no effort for education to claim its "neutrality" or pretend to be a bystander by calling itself, "descriptive." But the bottom line is that there is no such thing as a neutral act of teaching (Foucault, 1988; Freire, 1993). Even Albert Einstein deeply regretted his contribution to the creation of nuclear bomb as well as the bombing of Hiroshima in which he said in his autobiography five months before his death how it was the "one great mistake in my[his] life" and that perhaps it might be better off to have "not lifted a finger" (Clark, 1973, p. 672). Here, let's do everything that we can so that we can live fully without any future regrets. Let's not turn away from the responsibility we have to our own knowledge and the inextricable danger that comes with the act of teaching. Let's face the

challenge by making it the duty of education to not only teach wit and grit but also *how to use* wit and grit. Let's not deprive our students of their rights to explore and build their purpose behind their education.

Earlier, this paper has discussed at length about the need for a cultural revolution from the culture of takers toward a culture of givers as the right way of saving the world. However, with education lacking both purpose and responsibility for how its education should be used, it is questionable if education is actually helping or hindering this cultural revolution. This section started with the question, "Success for what? And well-being for whom?" At this moment, there is a real concern for positive education if after all "success" just means being smart, gritty, happy, and successful only for oneself (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008). But if education's aim is to better this world, then such a self-centric vision of "success" is not good enough and will only help to perpetuate the culture of takers. To move past this point, the next section will discuss what education can and should be in what this research paper terms "Altruistic Education."

Beyond Wit and Grit: Altruistic Education

"I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy. I woke and I saw that life is all service. I served and I saw that service is joy."

– Kahlil Gibran (n.d.)

There is no doubt about the importance of training both the heart and mind or the grit and wit. But the true value of education is not how witty and gritty a student might be. Instead, *the true value of education is determined by what students choose to do with the education they received.* Here, students must face the same dilemma discussed in the section on altruistic human flourishing between the choosing to use one's wit and grit to live above and beyond oneself or to use them to live the life of indulgence, to ascend towards one's

liberation from one's own desires or to become the slave to one's own desires, to break the "Hedonic Treadmill" and taste the joy of "complete happiness" or to get caught up in the endless chase for "incomplete happiness," to live a life of "human" or live a life of a "fatted cattle." These are the decisive choices which not only are the true test of education but also are where the success and failure of the cultural revolution from the culture of takers to the culture of givers start and end.

Education must help students strive toward making the right, good, and altruistic choices for both the benefits of the students themselves as well as the world. This process of choosing the right, good, and altruistic choices over one's own selfish tendencies is the same process which leads one toward self-actualization and human excellence as described by Maslow (1965) and Aristotle (trans. 1985). It is the process of learning how to weed out the taker within, of finding happiness in giving up, overcoming, and transcending one's selfish tendencies toward growth. This process is what this paper terms, "altruistic human flourishing." The education which can facilitate this process of altruistic human flourishing is, therefore, called "Altruistic Education."

Altruistic Education as an Education Which Strives to Teach the Joy and Beauty of Living Life Above and Beyond Oneself.

"Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know - that man is here for the sake of other men."

– Albert Einstein (Einstein & Calaprice, 2010, p. 230)

What is Altruistic Education? There are many ways to define altruistic education. First of which is that *altruistic education is an education which strives to teach the joy and beauty of living life above and beyond oneself*. Einstein once said, "The value of a man

resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable of receiving” (Einstein & Calaprice, 2010, p. 178). He further went on to describe how “The aim [of education] must be the training of independently acting and thinking individuals who, however, see in the service to the community their highest life achievement” (Einstein & Calaprice, 2010, p. 104). What Einstein stated is what altruistic education strives to accomplish. Many often associate the idea of “success” with the attainment of more wealth, power, fame, and well-being for oneself. For the same reason, schools then become a place where students come to learn how to take well. For altruistic education, success is *not* about what one gets; rather it is what one gives. Hence, it is a place where students come to learn how to give well. If a student could find the joy of thriving for others, then that for altruistic education is a true success. Here, the motto is to, “Live moderately for oneself but grandiosely for others.”

The goal of altruistic education is to grow students who are both capable and compassionate. The focus should be both inward—in the development of one’s character, the discovery of one’s purpose, passion and strengths, and cultivation of one’s virtues and human excellence—and outward—in the rigorous study of the arts and science. Together, they aim to create *capable givers* who, as a result, help to better the world by becoming a part of the culture of givers. Altruistic education accomplishes this goal by three steps:

1. By helping students to understand the happiness paradox or to intellectually come to see the stark differences between living a life of indulgence and a life lived above and beyond oneself in both the degree and kind of happiness, freedom, and growth.
2. By allowing students to put this knowledge into practice by learning to live less for oneself and more for others, and not the other way around.
3. By letting students experience for themselves, the benefits of a life lived beyond and above oneself.

It is important to note here that it is not enough to achieve altruistic human flourishing intellectually. So far, this paper has laid out the in-depth theoretical framework towards understanding why altruistic human flourishing holds the key to saving the world. But this is only an intellectual understanding. To this point, Aristotle (trans. 1985) said,

But the mass of mankind, instead of doing virtuous acts, have recourse to discussing virtue, and fancy that they are pursuing philosophy and that this will make them good men. In so doing they act like invalids who listen carefully to what the doctor says, but entirely neglect to carry out his prescriptions. That sort of philosophy will no more lead to a healthy state of soul than will the mode of treatment produce health of body. (NE 2.5)

No medicine is effective if no prescription is ever taken. No one is successful at riding a bike just by knowing its physics. What is imperative for the cultural revolution towards an altruistic society to be successful, therefore, is to put this knowledge to action.

The success of altruistic human flourishing rests upon one's action and so does the truth of altruistic human flourishing. In fact, I would go so far as to encourage one *not* to believe anything this paper said until it is properly put into practice. Understanding something by one's intellect is different from understanding something by one's experience. Hence, one must experience for oneself if the process of altruistic human flourishing is truly beneficial to both oneself and the world. Does making one's cup smaller by lessening one's ego actually lead one toward "complete" and attainable happiness? And is the so-called "complete happiness" actually better than the typical pursuit of happiness or the endless chase of taking? When Aristotle forewarned about making the "growth choice" as hard and painful, how hard is it to spend one's life in the service of others? And how easy is it to just live the life of indulgence? These are questions which no research paper could ever wholly describe and must only be lived and experienced to understand fully.

Altruistic society is not possible without altruistic action. And altruistic action is not possible without understanding and experiencing for oneself the joy of and beauty of living life above and beyond oneself. Action, or the act of giving up oneself or giving oneself away in the service of others or the act of altruistic human flourishing, is *everything* in altruistic education. No one becomes altruistic just by thinking about it.

Altruistic Education as an Education Which Strives to Give the Best Thing Humans Could Achieve and Become.

Another way to define altruistic education is that *altruistic education is an education which strives to give the best thing humans could achieve and become*. Wouldn't it be great if education could help students find growth, happiness, purpose, and freedom while in the process helping create the necessary conditions for world peace? Wouldn't it be great to save oneself while at the same time save the world? This might sound too good to be true, but it is not.

Altruistic education helps students to become their best possible self by helping them to build their character and purpose behind their education. Aristotle (trans. 1985) defined "Character" as intentions and actions which benefit both the individual and society as a whole. In altruistic education, students build and cultivate their character by exercising our human capacity to live life above and beyond themselves. Making altruistic choices is our birthrights. And when we exercise these rights, we become most "human" or all that we can become as humans. The result of exercising our right is that it softens one's ego, makes one's cup smaller, trains one to become the master of one's own desire, builds one's character, leads one toward "complete" and attainable happiness, and at the same time changes the world at the individual level.

Today, education still lacks the initiative to help students become all that they can be by helping them strive towards making these humane and growth choices. Students are often treated as if they are machines whereby the students' worth are measured chiefly by their functionality or how well they perform. But is that what humans are all about? Is there no merit at all in choosing to be kind when we don't have to? Is there no beauty at all in choosing to live a difficult life of service for the good of others by giving up the easy life of self-indulgence? What about our innate ability to choose above and beyond one's skin? Is there no value at all in exercising or being what is "human?"

The first step toward enabling humans to become all that humans can become is, as a matter of fact, almost a given. But still, it is what modern education often misses. And the first step is as simple as the following: if we want students to be all that humans can be then we must first treat students as humans—humans who are born with the tendencies for both good and evil, humans who are endowed with different strengths, shortcomings, interests and passions, humans who possess the ability to choose as well as the need to know the "why" behind their own choice.

Purpose is the reason behind all that one chooses to do with one's life. But if choice, or the unique human trait which constitutes what makes human "human," is not even what education today sees as important, then the reason behind the choice is even less so. In contrast, altruistic education is entirely contingent upon the choices students make. Hence, the task of helping students to build their purpose or the "why" behind their choices is inseparable from and must be built right into altruistic education.

Inspired by Rath (2015), altruistic education aims to build the purpose behind education in two ways: (1) by helping students explore and cultivate who they are, and (2) by helping students see and understand the world. Instead of teaching birds how to swim, altruistic education must build its education around the students' strengths, weaknesses,

passion, and interest. Each student is different and, thus, to help each student become their best selves, it is essential to abandon the old industrial model of education as an assembly line and work directly with who the students are. And when the student's strengths, passion, and interest meet the need of the world then what comes to life is purpose.



Figure 5. Illustration of how interest, needs, and strengths come together to form purpose.

Reprinted from *Are You Fully Charged?: The 3 Keys to Energizing Your Work and Life* (p. 77), by T. Rath, 2015, Silicon Guild.

Altruistic education must open doors for students to be able to see the world for what it is—good or bad. It should not be a bubble. It should expose students to as many real world problems as possible so that students are well-aware and in touch with the needs of the world. Consequently, students will know how they can channel their strengths and passions toward what the world needs most. This creates a feedback loop because when students are allowed to face real needs and problems of the world, students are called upon to develop themselves further to meet these callings better.

The problems in education can succinctly be summarized in two phases: (1) power without character, and (2) education without purpose. Altruistic education aims to solve both of these major problems. It is great to have both wit and grit, but the beauty of being humans

rest upon how we use our wit and grit. By treating students as fully humans, altruistic education understands that humans are born with the tendencies for good and evil. Thus, it aims to build character for students by helping them to rise above these tendencies towards what is right and good. If life is like a journey, then what it needs is also a destination. Education without purpose is like learning without knowing why. By building its education around the students, altruistic education aims to help students build their purpose behind their education by helping to explore both their inner and outer world. Whether the goal is to attain “complete” happiness, build character, become virtuous, discover a higher purpose to life, or even make the world a better place, altruistic education is a complete education which aims no less than to give the best things humans could and should achieve.

The Need for Altruistic Education

“As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world – that is the myth of the atomic age – as in being able to remake ourselves.”

– Mahatma Gandhi (n.d.)

Today we, humans, are looking to solve world problems which lie inside of ourselves by fixing what is outside of ourselves. In 2015, the United Nations (n.d.) announced its new global initiatives called, the “Sustainable development goals.” There are 17 of these goals including: “no poverty,” “zero hunger,” “good health and well-being,” “quality education,” “gender equality,” “clean water and sanitation,” “affordable and clean energy,” “decent work and economic growth,” “industry, innovation and infrastructure,” “reduced inequalities,” “sustainable cities and communities,” “responsible consumption and production,” “climate action,” “conserve and sustainable use of oceans,” “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of land,” “peace, justice, and strong institutions,” “strengthen global partnerships.” Of course, these goals are extremely important but what these goals have in common is that they

all begin by changing the world from what is outside of ourselves. In the same way, politicians and economists too often talk about increasing the country's GDP as the way of bettering one's country or the world. If wealth can save the world, why is humanity nowhere near world peace even though over these past centuries the world's GDP has increased by over a thousand folds? Even if it rains in gold today, would humanity have world peace? Or perhaps what we would more likely have is war? How much wealth would be enough if our greed is infinite?

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed" (Gandhi, n.d.). The real problem in modernity which this paper has stressed over and over again is not the issue of how much wealth and power we, humans, have or can have. Rather, the problem is in how we choose to put our wealth and power to use. This is where altruistic education comes in.

Altruistic education is what education can and should be. It is a complete education which gives not only give wit and grit to the students but also the opportunity for them to find a worthy purpose upon which they should use their wit and grit for. It takes a complete scientific stance in its own education whereby students are not treated as "vessels" or "empty bank accounts" to be filled or imposed upon but rather students are encouraged to test and experiment if living life for others is truly beneficial to oneself and the world. Instead of educating around academic achievement, its focus is the student and their development to become all they could be. Particularly with the current state of the world where the culture of takers is the norm, altruistic education plays a much-needed role in bettering the world by facilitating students to transform the world starting from within.

A Vision of an Altruistic School

"If you can dream it, you can do it."

– Walt Disney (n.d.)

Thomas Jefferson once said, "On matters of style swim with the current, on matters of principle stand like a rock" (Jefferson, n.d.). This research paper has so far laid out the principle or the why to altruistic education. But just like how there can be many paths to the same destination, there can be many styles or ways of accomplishing the same goals within altruistic education. To help readers get a more concrete picture of what an altruistic school might look like I would like to offer one possible vision of an altruistic school.

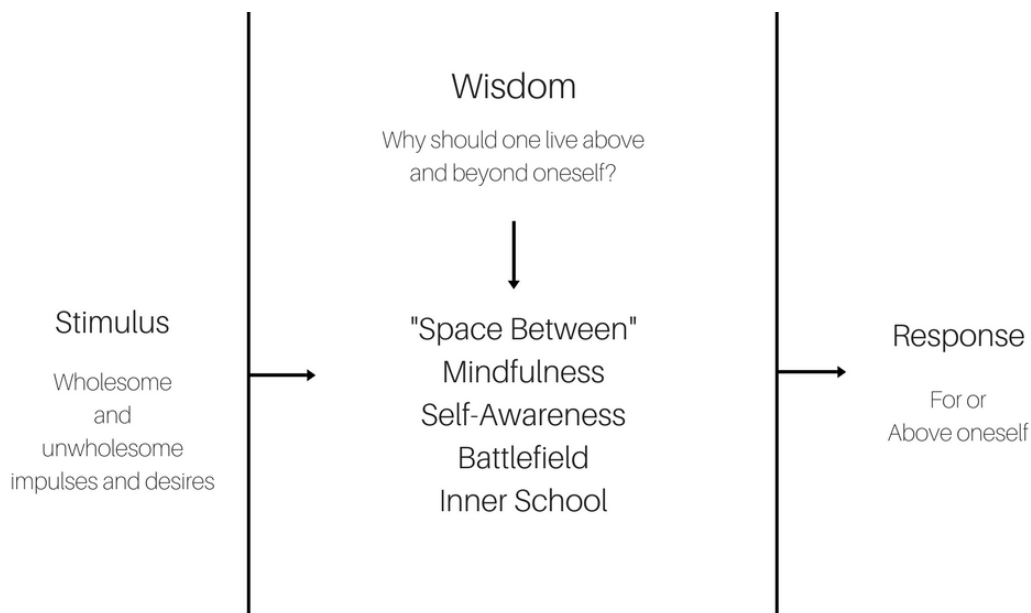
The goal of an altruistic school is to help students develop both their inner and outer world. However, developing what is outside of ourselves or extrinsic learning is what modern education is already doing well; thus, this section will specifically focus on what is missing in education—namely, the cultivation of the student's inner world or intrinsic learning. First, it will explain the inner working for intrinsic learning as inner battle then introduce the four components within it—stimulus, mindfulness, response, and wisdom. Out of this mechanism, it will recommend three primary processes of inner cultivation: the cultivation of wisdom, the development of mindfulness, and service to others. With the goal of making this vision as tangible as possible, it will translate this knowledge of intrinsic learning into a sample curriculum for an altruistic university. Lastly, it will touch upon the role of altruistic teachers as well as suggest some criteria for how to best setup an altruistic school.

Intrinsic Learning: The Inner Battle

"It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles."

– Buddha (n.d.)

The best way to understand the process of inner cultivation or intrinsic learning is to think of it as a battlefield. In this inner battle, there are four elements. First is the stimulus or our wholesome or unwholesome impulses and desires. Second is the response or how we respond to the stimulus—to encourage it, rise above it, or give in to it. Third, there is what Frankl (n.d.) called “the space between stimulus and response.” Another name for this so-called “space” is “self-awareness” or “mindfulness” (Pakaratsakun, 2014; Smalley & Winston, 2010). Fourth is wisdom or the knowledge which leads one to choose to live above and beyond oneself. Below is the illustration of how these four components of intrinsic learning interact with one another which the paragraphs below will discuss.



Mindfulness can be defined as knowing oneself or being aware of oneself (Pakaratsakun, 2014; Smalley & Winston, 2010). When one is aware of one's wholesome and unwholesome impulses and desires, one faces with oneself. Hence, to be mindful is to be in one's inner battlefield. When I am waiting in line and someone in front of me is slow, I might get impatient and irritated. But when I am mindful of my anger, I can learn to choose to overcome it. In that way, not only will I learn how to save myself from my anger but at the same time, I am learning to build my character from someone who is impatient to someone who is patient. (Again, notice the characteristic of altruistic human flourishing whereby an

altruistic choice always affects not only how one interacts with oneself but also how one interacts with others.) When I am talking to others, sometimes I might become defensive. But once I become mindful that I am defensive, I can change. I can choose to live above my defensiveness to listen and become more open-minded. Sometimes when I walked to class, my mind is ahead of the reality. It demanded, “I want to be in the class right now!” Hereafter, each step I took, all I could think about is “Why am I not there yet? Why am I not there yet? Why am I not there yet?” What I do not realize is that I am anxious and frustrated not because I haven’t reached my destination but because I’ve unskillfully placed my mind ahead of the reality.

One’s ego, mind, and desire are intangible and extremely hard to pin point. And thus, one must be extremely detailed, meticulous and delicate to train them. Though being mindful while walking to class, standing in line, or listening to others might look minor and trivial, but these small choices are what eventually build one’s character. When one is working on a trillion-dollar project where it might also take years to complete, one will face the same inner enemies—frustration, anxiety, worry, etc. They will come back to haunt. And they will ask the same question of, “Why is the project not done yet? Why is the project not done yet? Why is the project not done yet?” To be able to win a big fight, one must first be able to win the small fight. If walking to class or waiting in line still drives one’s patient, then one can forget about the trillion-dollar project. Here, *winning these small inner battles is everything to the development of one’s character.*

The choice between growth and regression is in every moment. There isn’t a moment which mindfulness is not valuable or not needed. It is the door toward altruistic human flourishing. It is what gives us the “power to choose” or the space necessary for us to choose how we should respond. Being mindful is, therefore, like being in the inner school. Because once, one is mindful one can learn how we can rise above oneself. No one wins an inner

battle without at least being in the field. For this reason, the first key process toward building one's character is to build one's mindfulness.

Many brushes off mindfulness meditation because of its religious root. However, religion is not all true or all nonsense (De Botton, 2012). The practice of mindfulness meditation is just one of those practices which work. In fact, one could review the literature to discover the endless scientific evidence on benefits of mindfulness. Mindfulness helps foster resilience, well-being, and overall life satisfaction (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Furthermore, research shows that mindfulness can also lead to the increase in prosocial behavior (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger & Davidson, 2015; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kemeny et al., 2012). Again, the success and truth of altruistic education depend *not* on what one thinks or believes. Just as these researchers have revealed, the truth and the true value of mindfulness are waiting for us to rediscover if we are willing to try it and put them to the test.

Now, once we are on the battlefield, there are two main forces at work. First is our own unwholesome desires who try to hijack and lead us toward the path of least resistance. Another is what this paper calls "wisdom" or the knowledge of why one should live above and beyond oneself. Mindfulness or self-awareness is what everyone naturally possesses. But without the knowledge of why one should live above and beyond oneself or the knowledge of altruistic human flourishing, it is like entering a battlefield without a weapon. One can't win regardless of how many times one goes into battle. For example, if a hundred dollar is dropped on the floor and one is well-aware of his or her greed to take it. He or she is mindful. But if he or she believes taking the money for themselves is a better choice than giving it back to the owner, then it is true that he or she is on the battlefield. However, the problem is that he or she is fighting for the wrong side.

For this exact reason, the second element in improving one's inner world is wisdom or the knowledge of altruistic human flourishing or the understanding of why one should live above and beyond oneself. This is what this research paper is all about. It is the understanding and knowledge of why should one be less for oneself and more for others.

Mindfulness without wisdom can't lead one toward victory, but so does wisdom without mindfulness. An example of this might be someone who has a lot of wisdom and knowledge about altruistic human flourishing, but when driving a car, he or she forgets all about his or her inner cultivation. When a car abruptly cuts in front of his or her car, this person just loses his or her temper. Without mindfulness, there is no space between stimulus and response. One would be reacting or responding to whatever his stimulus demands without exercising his or her right to choose. Regardless of how wise or how much one wants to develop oneself, if one is not mindful then it is like possessing a lot of weapons but didn't get any chance to use them.

The requirement to win one's inner battle or to choose the good, right and altruistic choice over one's impulses and desires, therefore, depends on two factors: (1) one's mindfulness, and (2) one's wisdom or knowledge of altruistic human flourishing. With this mechanism in mind, one could see how altruistic students and teachers must develop their inner world by cultivating themselves through (1) the study of altruistic human flourishing and (2) the development of one's mindfulness. However, there is also a third process needed to catalyze the first two, and this third process is duty/service to others.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others" (Gandhi, n.d.). Anyone could say they are or pretend to be altruistic but only when they put themselves in the service of others will their true colors show. I have seen and known many people who are extremely passionate and knowledgeable about living above and beyond oneself, but after putting themselves in the service of others for a time,

many started to falter. They think, “Why should I give myself away in the service of others and get nothing if I could spend that time and energy to get something for myself?” “Why am I living a low and modest life if I could live a life of luxury like others?” “Why should I learn to live with less if I could learn to live for more?” “Isn’t being ‘successful’ about the abundance of pleasure, wealth, fame, and power for oneself?” These questions will test what a person is truly made of. Whatever choices a person chooses reveals his or her real character.

Other schools give exams to test the students’ knowledge but, for altruistic education, duty/service, or giving oneself away in the service of others, is the real exam to test student’s character. It is assigned or self-assigned like homework to help students and teachers lessen their egos and push themselves beyond the boundary of their egos. The goal is to foster growth, character, responsibility, altruism, sacrifice, and citizenship within the school and beyond.

One of the most famous quotes in *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu (2013) is as follows:

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle. (p.158)

Mindfulness is what enables one to know oneself. Duty/service is what brings out and reveals the enemy within. And wisdom is what one needs to be able to choose the growth choice. Together they lead one toward one’s inner victory which leads one toward living a more altruistic life.

Sample Curriculum Guideline for Altruistic University

To translate this knowledge of intrinsic learning into an actual school setting, below is a brief four years plan for an altruistic university. I specifically choose to make a plan for an

altruistic university because I believe altruistic education is most suitable for adult education at the college level and up. Below is a possible outline of what students will do/learn to cultivate their inner world at an altruistic university:

- The science of altruistic human flourishing,
 - Study into the nature of happiness,
 - Study into the practice of altruistic human flourishing,
 - This subject mainly focuses on the practical side of *how* to overcome, let go, live above, and give up oneself. Teachers who have spent their life learning the science of altruistic human flourishing could aid students in the foundation and techniques of living altruistically. An example of this is something similar to what I had given when I talked about intrinsic learning as a battlefield. This knowledge helps students to understand what they need to do to be able to choose the growth choice over the regression choice.
 - Study into the importance of altruistic human flourishing,
 - This is what this paper is about. It's about the "why" of altruistic human flourishing. This subject aims to help students explore the joy, beauty, and meaning of living an altruistic life.
- Mindfulness Meditation,
 - This should be practiced daily. There should also be a one-month silent retreat at the beginning of each school year for both students and teachers.
- Daily Self-Reflection,
 - This could come in any forms such as journaling, goal-settings, contemplation and etc.
- Mentorship,

- This should be done on a regular basis whereby older students mentors newer students on their progress of living altruistically and teachers too should mentor students who they are assigned to look after.
- Living a Life of Service,
 - Charitable Giving,
 - Duty/Service/Volunteer/Chore.

Throughout the four years of learning at an altruistic university, students will get a chance to do and learn all of these to cultivate their inner world. However, the emphasis and the degree of freedom will vary from each school year and each student. The focus for new students is to lay down the basic of living an altruistic life. The first year of an altruistic university will mainly concentrate on assimilating students into the altruistic culture. It should set up the shared language, habits, and routines so that it will set the right tone and right message of what altruistic school is all about and what everyone will do within their four years of education.

Humans typically live life in accordance to what we want. But altruistic education aims to train students who live *above and beyond* what they want or don't want or to be higher than themselves. Expectedly, the first year will most likely be the toughest year due to the drastic change in both student's inner and outer world. Nonetheless, tough times when suffer together can create a sense of togetherness and comradeship. Thus, it is also important that intimacy and a sense of family or companionship among students as well as all the other members of the community is formed within the first year of school. The goal is to make sure that every member of the community feel they are a part of the community and that they are not alone on their path toward altruistic human flourishing. Theodore Roosevelt once said,

Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty ... I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well. (Roosevelt, n.d.)

Nothing easy is worth pursuing. And altruistic education is meant to be extremely tough but at the same time extremely rewarding.

The focus in the first year is getting accustomed to the altruistic culture, but on the second and third year, the focus will be more balance between intrinsic learning and extrinsic learning. The goals within these two years are (1) the integration between intrinsic learning and extrinsic learning, (2) the self-discovery of who the students are and capable of, (3) the exploration what the world needs, and (4) the rigorous study of the arts and science or in short extrinsic learning. It should matter little which goal the students would like to begin with since eventually they should all lead to one another.

For example, by opening up the world to the students or by encouraging students to take the initiative and be proactive in exploring the problem around them—locally or globally, students might feel moved and called for to help. Once students are inspired to make a difference, they will want to start building the necessary skills and learn the appropriate knowledge to be able to solve these real world problems critically.

Altruistic education should always be action-oriented. Unlike modern education which blindly focuses on academic achievement, what altruistic education will focus on is real world impact. To be able to experience the fruits of living life altruistically, it is important that students get the chance to serve in a real way by working to solve real world problems. Students should not be graded but evaluated through their progress in improving the quality of both their inner world and their outer world. Again, the goal is not to judge or put a valuation on the worth of someone's life but to help students to become all that they can be.

While the students are working to improve their outer world, students will also have the opportunity to improve their inner world by coming to face with themselves. Whether this would be the fear of failure while working on an important project, the frustration that might springs up when working with other students, the weariness that sets in when the life of service appears hard and painful, and the temptation of the easy and pleasurable life of indulgence, these are some tests of character which the students will get to face and learn to overcome.

By the end of the third year, students should already be living and breathing altruistic human flourishing. They should be equipped with the growth mentality. They should always strive to live above and beyond oneself in every little detail of their lives, in every moment, and every place they go. They should have mastered the three factors of intrinsic learning: mindfulness, wisdom, and service. After three rigorous years of exploring both the inner and outer world as well as constantly putting themselves on the line in the service of others, students should have a good idea of their purpose, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and passion or how they would like to make a dent in universe.

A successful student in altruistic education should enter the world with the skills, the experience, as well as the attitude of what Einstein earlier described as someone who sees in the service to the community his or her highest life achievement (Einstein & Calaprice, 2010, p. 104). To help prepare students for an altruistically successful life, in the last year at an altruistic university, students will be asked to put all that they have learned to make a real world impact in whichever way they see fits. This is something comparable to a thesis or a final project except the emphasis is to help students prepare themselves for a possible life career. The goal is to give students the opportunity to explore and try out what they would like to do after their education. Ideally, whatever the students choose to do should be able to turn into a real world project which they can continue for life. This could be anything from an

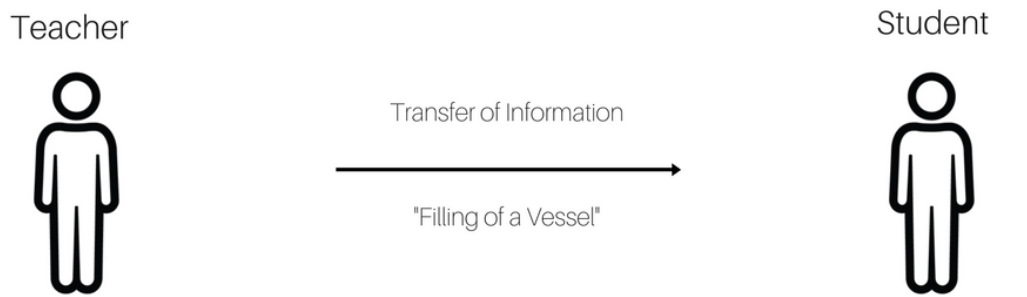
organization, a social enterprise, a startup, a book, an invention, a piece of art work or anything the students see would be the best way for bettering the world. Who says saving the world have to be all serious and tense? Here, the key is to have fun giving.

Altruistic School Setting

Think of student as a seed. Regardless of how good a seed might be, it can't grow to become a tree if it does not have the right conditions—soil, water, sunlight, etc. What is essential is the right environment in which the students can grow. In this subsection, it will discuss two critical external factors required for a successful altruistic school.

The teaching model for an altruistic school is different from most school. Teaching is normally thought of as the transfer of information. But, as Socrates stated, “Education is the kindling of a flame, not a filling of a vessel” (Socrates, n.d.). The role of an altruistic teacher, therefore, is not so much to teach as it is to inspire, guide, and support the students to thrive for and by themselves. Ultimately, the goal is autonomy. And autonomy can't be cultivated if teachers tell students everything they ought to do. That would not help the students to stand on their own feet and lead their own life once they are outside of the school. Students must be given the freedom to fail and learn how to get themselves back up. They must be able to think by themselves, to grow by themselves, and to thrive by themselves. Learning should not be dependent upon the teacher; it should be dependent upon the learner. Students show real maturity if they can learn without the influence of a teacher. The illustration below shows what the teaching model for altruistic education looks like when compared with the traditional model of education.

Common Model of Teaching



Altruistic Education Model of Teaching



An altruistic teacher must think of his or herself as someone who wants to grow a tree. His or her task is not to grow *for* the tree. That is the tree's task. *The task of an altruistic teacher is to create the conditions in which students will want to grow.* Whether this would be creating the right culture and environment which fosters altruism or giving the students the necessary knowledge and inspiration for why they should learn or live altruistically, these are some of the central tasks which an altruistic teacher must always keep in mind. The questions altruistic teachers must ask themselves are, how to teach so that the students are inspired to learn by themselves? How to teach so that learning becomes as intrinsically motivated as possible? How can teachers motivate students to self-assign their own duty/service/chore for the sake of their own altruistic self-cultivation? How to teach so that students can become their own best teachers? Or to put it another way, how to teach so that teachers no longer need to teach? This is the greatest puzzle of teaching, and it is also where the success of teaching lies.

It is difficult for the students to thrive for and by themselves, if the teachers have no idea how to thrive and cultivate for and by themselves. For this reason, *the first and most important external factor to the growth of an altruistic students is the teachers themselves.* Teachers are the heart of altruistic education. To be called a “teacher” in an altruistic education, he or she must possess more than just expertise. What is necessary is also his or her ability to live and inspire others to live life above and beyond oneself. Altruistic teachers must excel at cultivating themselves. They must be what Einstein earlier described as “independently acting and thinking individuals who, however, see in the service to the community their highest life achievement” (Einstein & Calaprice, 2010, p. 104). How to successfully live beyond oneself? Why is it necessary to serve others and how does that relates to one’s well-being? How to find the joy and beauty of living the life above and beyond oneself? These are some important questions which teachers must be able to answer, not only to the students but more importantly to themselves, not only through their words but more importantly through their actions. No talks of compassion will ever be as inspiring or heartfelt as seeing with one’s own eyes the act of compassion. Altruistic teachers must, therefore, lead and inspire others by embodying and exemplifying altruistic human flourishing.

If the students are like sprouts which are beginning to grow their character and build their inner strength, then it is important that altruistic school helps to shelter these sprouts until they are strong enough before exposing them to the external world. If the first day of class teacher let the students choose between playing video games as opposed to doing mindfulness meditation, then, of course, the new students who might not understand the value of altruistic human flourishing would all flock toward the video games. A sprout can’t become a tree if it prematurely dies from pests, bugs, or from too much sunlight and water.

Accordingly, it is important, especially in the beginning, for students to be exposed to as little interference as possible.

For this reason, an ideal setting for an altruistic school is to be close to nature and secluded from the worldly influence of egoism. The school should give a sense of tranquility and peace as soon as anyone enters the school. The use of technology should be limited only for learning purposes. Again, an altruistic school is a place where people come to reduce their egos or to learn to live moderately. It is not a place where one comes to enjoy oneself or live a life of indulgence. For this reason, some degree of asceticism should also be an option if the students themselves wish to take up such practice as a way of accelerating their progress in learning how to live a moderate life or learning how to be satisfied with less. It is also important to note here that even though the goal of altruistic education is to live above and beyond oneself but this does not mean one should disregard or deny oneself. The goal is to learn how to find satisfaction in living just enough for oneself so that one can spend the rest of one's time and energy in living for the joy and beauty of service.

If a sprout is sheltered all its life, then it becomes dependent and can't withstand what is outside of that environment. Once the students have mastered the three processes of the inner cultivation—wisdom, mindfulness, and duty—then they are at least equipped to go upstream against the culture of takers. For this reason, in the third or fourth year of an altruistic university education, students can and should be given more freedom to learn one of the most valuable lessons in living an altruistic life—how to be a giver in the world of takers.

All in all, the vision of an altruistic school is still very much a work in progress. The goal of this section is to provide one possible way or guideline of creating an altruistic school so that the reader could understand altruistic education in a more tangible manner. My vision of an altruistic school is a community where people are inspired and aspired to altruistically flourish by helping and supporting one another to learn to live a life above and beyond

oneself. Instead of scaling students on a curve or ranked them by grades which encouraged self-centric attitude, comparison, and in-group competition, what this community will create is a family of givers which fosters love, compassion, collaboration, service, and citizenship. When the norm is about the endless expansion of one's ego, the norm in an altruistic school is about the lessening of one's ego. When the norm is driven by self-interest, the norm in an altruistic school will be driven by the joy and beauty of service to others. When the norm seeks and defines happiness in the act of taking, the norm in an altruistic school is to seek and define happiness in the act of giving. When the world is moving downstream toward decadence, self-slavery, and suffering, altruistic schools will spiral upstream toward growth, strengths, happiness, freedom, character, and purpose. If a community such as this is possible then the world such as this is too.

Proposal for Future Action

"Vision without execution is hallucination."

– Thomas Edison (n.d.)

Recently, researchers (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012) published an alarming report on what youth see as their life goal. When comparing youth of this generation with the previous ones, what they found is that life goals related to extrinsic values such as money, status, or fame have become more important than those concerned with intrinsic values such as self-acceptance, affiliation, and community. Concern for others, as measured by empathy for outgroups, charity donations and the importance placed on having a pro-social career, has declined. The interest in social problems, political participation, trust in government, action to help the environment, and energy conservation or what the researchers termed under "civic orientation" has also seen a decline with improving the environment taking the biggest

plunge. Here, the research concluded that the rise of “Generation Me” over “Generation We” is exactly what we are witnessing.

What this means is that the culture of takers is on the rise. And with the trend being as it is, there is a real concern about what our youth will do with their education. Altruistic education is needed more than ever. But since altruistic education is a brand new concept, the research on it is still sparse, peripheral, insufficient, and mostly only implied in other related terms. What are the best possible methods of helping students flourish altruistically? How to train teachers who will embody the joy and beauty of giving? What kind of learning environment would be conducive to creating a culture of givers? What have other alternative forms of education whose goal is similar to altruistic education already been tried? These are some important questions which require further research in order to pave the way to the first of its kind—an altruistic school. For this reason, *what this whole research paper would like to propose as the future action is the further study on how to implement and create altruistic schools.*

I believe a better world is possible. But it is not possible without actions. Here, I would like to urge everyone who sees the value in living above and beyond oneself to come together to actualize altruistic education. With the right support and the right team, I truly believe that altruistic schools can be the best possible learning platform which helps students become their best possible selves who go out into the world to do the best possible thing. It would revolutionize the way education is and has been. It will help change and save many lives. It will help students to be all that they can be. Its students will graduate with the passion for serving and having a strong desire to improve themselves not only for themselves but the good of mankind. It will be an exemplary school which showcases what education is capable of. It will prove how self-interest is not the only drive which humans possess. But altruism, compassion, love, courage, and virtue gained from putting others in front of oneself

are the greater forces which every human possesses and can develop. It will become the leading force of bettering the world by changing the world from the world of takers to the world of givers.

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